DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 554 24 RC 004 615

AUTHOR	Donaldson, George W.
TITLE	A Position Paper: Research Utilization in Outdoor Education.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Univ., University Park. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
BUREAU NO	BR-6-2469
PUB DATE	Sep 70
CONTRACT	OEC-1-6-062469-1574
NOTE	13p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.75
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrative Problems, *Curriculum Design, Educational Philosophy, *Outdoor Education, Research Needs, *Research Utilization, *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Since historical perspectives, philosophical positions, and a statement of research priorities are presently lacking in the field of outdoor education, this paper was designed as a guide for researchers. The 4 subject headings used for discussion of research needs and priorities are history and philosophy, curriculum and learning, administration, and teacher education. An action program is suggested for increasing the amount of research in the field, as well as for channeling the research into areas of priority concern. (LS)

ED042554

A POSITION PAPER: RESEARCH UTILIZATION IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

by

GEORGE W. DONALDSON

Professor

Department of Outdoor Teacher Education
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

September 1970

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CLEARINGHOUSE ON RURAL EDUCATION AND SMALL SCHOOLS (CRESS)

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

This publication was prepared pursuant to a grant with the Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

RC004615

RELATED ERIC/CRESS PUBLICATIONS

The following documents may be ordered in either microfiche (MF) or hard copy (HC) from ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Payment must accompany orders totaling less than $5.00. For all orders, add $0.50 for handling. In the United States, add sales tax as applicable. Foreign orders must be accompanied by a 15-percent service charge, calculated to the nearest cent. Order, by ED number only, from

ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS)
The National Cash Register Company
4936 Fairmont Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

1. Outdoor Education: An Overview (ED 034 631), by Julian W. Smith, offers a discussion of the nature and scope of outdoor education. (EDRS Price: MF-$0.25, HC-$0.50.)

2. Outdoor Education: A Synthesis (ED 037 286), by George W. Donaldson, discusses outdoor education in terms of principles, history, outdoor experiences, administration, and teacher education. (EDRS Price: MF-$0.25, HC-$0.95.)

3. Outdoor Education, A Selected Bibliography (ED 037 285), compiled by Eulyne Fulton and Charlotte Ann Loomis, provides 134 annotated citations of outdoor education documents appearing in the ERIC system through December of 1969. (EDRS Price: MF-$0.50, HC-$4.00.) This bibliography is also available in paperbound copy from - Manager, Duplicating Service; New Mexico State University, P. O. Box 3CB; Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001--at a cost of $1.00 each for 1-5 copies or $0.75 each for orders of over 5 copies. Order by title from Duplicating Service.

Introduction

Research in outdoor education almost appears to have been conducted on the basis of what is easiest to study rather than in answer to "what needs to be known." Such a criterion would explain the undue research emphasis upon the resident, or school-camping, aspect of outdoor education. It might also explain the early preponderance of administrative studies. On the other hand, there have been no authoritative, prestigious statements of research priorities. The individual researcher, almost always a candidate for a graduate degree, is left to his own--and his advisor's--devices. Small wonder that gaps do exist.

History and Philosophy

Outdoor education is new enough on the American scene that it offers a dual advantage to the historical researcher. Not only are historical perspectives needed, but people and documents going back to the very beginnings of the field are still readily available. Strangely, there are few historical studies. And there are needs for at least these studies:

1. A tracing of the actual chronology of events and assessment of the impact of both the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the National Life Camps. General credit is given to both institutions for their early efforts in the field. Two theses, one each at the

master's and doctor's levels, have dealt with single aspects of their history. There now remains the need for a broad-brush treatment of each.

2. Studies of several leaders in outdoor education and the interrelations of their careers. In-depth studies of, say, a dozen or more of the outstanding authorities should give depth and breadth to the history of the movement.

3. Specific historical documentation of the relationship between the nature-study movement in American schools and the nature-recreation movement elsewhere, and the beginnings of outdoor education.

4. Documentation and assessment of the impact of organized children's camping on the outdoor education movement, especially its "school-camping" phase.

5. In-depth case studies of the histories of successful outdoor education programs in American public schools. There are enough such programs of sufficient age to make a comparative historical study possible. What can be learned from such studies may shed considerable light on the problems of initiating and continuing outdoor education programs. An interesting, and needed, counterpoint to these studies would be comparable studies of programs which have failed.

Philosophical studies are rare indeed in outdoor education, even more rare than in education generally. While admittedly difficult, the method has obvious benefits for a field sometimes characterized as "long on action; short on philosophy." At least the following kinds of research are needed:

1. Studies of the philosophical backgrounds of a number of leaders in the field. One such study has been made but was limited to two leaders.
2. Studies of the "movements" in American education which preceded, paralleled, or influenced outdoor education--notably children's camping, progressive education, and the nature-study movement.
3. Studies of philosophical shifts which have taken place and the rationale behind such shifts. There is clear evidence that there has been an increased academic influence along with a corresponding decrease in the "holistic" approach which characterized early school-camping programs. While Sputnik is usually credited, the exact nature and cause of the shift have not been spelled out. They should be.
4. Much has been made of the notion that outdoor education has been practiced for considerable time and is still searching for its own definition. While a definition

that is too precise might limit rather than facilitate desirable practices, there are needs for studies in the area which would be primarily philosophical in nature.

Curriculum and Learning

One of the difficulties faced by researchers in outdoor education arises from the fact that the field claims no substantive subject-matter base. Definitions vary. Most simply, outdoor education is "method," "place," "discovery," and even "adventuring"--but always "in the outdoors." Seldom does a definition suggest that there are outdoor education subjects. So, studies dealing with content must view subject matter in the light of method.

Empirical studies comparing the methods of outdoor education with other methods are scarce. And even the few which have been done have been criticized on one or both of the charges of (1) inadequate design or (2) inadequate populations. Interestingly, a number of the studies of the effect of outdoor education methods of learning in the cognitive domain yielded significant, subjectively observed findings in terms of interest, attitude, and self-concept.

Although many more learners are probably involved in the non-resident aspects of outdoor education (on-school sites, nearby sites, and day-long or briefer field trips), there has been proportionately

more research on the resident aspect.

The last few years have witnessed a substantial movement of outdoor education into the inner city, largely the result of Federal activity. Other new programs also owe their beginnings to Federal funding. Little published research has come from either source, and no general evaluation of these projects has yet been published.

There have been no efforts in outdoor education which even roughly parallel the concerted energies expended on national curriculum projects, especially in the sciences. Various federally funded projects have produced curriculum materials, but none of these has achieved a helpfully wide distribution when viewed against national needs.

In the general area of outdoor learning experiences, then, these needs exist:

1. Empirical studies of exemplary design applied to large populations.
2. Studies which clearly distinguish between <u>cognitive</u> and <u>affective</u> domains.
3. Studies specifically centering on interest and attitudes of the learners.

4. Studies specifically focusing on the individual growth of the learner, especially in his self-concept.
5. Studies of the nature of learning in the nonresident program.
6. Evaluation studies of the varieties of federally funded programs.
7. Studies to determine the unique needs of inner-city children and youths with respect to outdoor education.
8. Authoritative national curriculum studies.

Administration

Administrative problems once received the almost undivided attention of researchers in the field of outdoor education. This emphasis has declined over the years, but a disproportionate residue of administrative studies remains. And, proportionately, too many of these focus on administrative aspects of the resident program.

Other administrative studies are needed:

1. A national study of the legal bases for outdoor education programs, especially those which move pupils some distance from their schools. A legitimate result of such a study might be the drafting of ideal permissive legislation.
2. Studies of the methods used to finance outdoor education programs over the country, as well as projections of ideal methods.

3. A survey of the variety of arrangements by which schools use lands and facilities not school-owned. Guidelines for contractual arrangements between owners and users might be a useful result of such studies.
4. Studies of facilities for both resident and nonresident outdoor education. Again, such studies should project ideal types.
5. In the light of changing emphases, updates of personnel studies made when "outdoor education" meant "school camping."
6. Examination of professional and legal implications of the arrangement by which agencies (nature centers, recreation departments, conservation-oriented organizations, etc.) provide outdoor education programs for schools.

Teacher Education

The education of teachers for outdoor instruction has received relatively little research attention. This fact is little short of amazing when one considers it against the frequent statements that outdoor education practice depends importantly upon the ability and willingness of teachers to teach outdoors.

While there are relatively few institutions for teacher

education engaged in outdoor education at either undergraduate or graduate levels, the number of these is increasing. As outdoor education grows in the public schools--as appears likely--it would seem that the increase will continue, even accelerate. By the same token, programs for the education of inservice teachers will likely increase. Both would profit from sound research in teacher education.

The following studies are currently needed:

1. An in-depth study of existing programs in teacher education at both undergraduate and graduate levels.
2. Comparative studies of "departmental" and "interdisciplinary" approaches at both levels.
3. Comparative studies of existing inservice education programs.
4. Projections of ideal-type programs for preservice as well as inservice education programs.

Summary: Needed Research

More research and better research are needed. Special attention should be given to studies in the foregoing areas defined as "Curriculum and Learning" and "Teacher Education." An action program is needed to get this more and better research.

An Action Program

As stated above, no authoritative prestigious statements of research needs and priorities have been made. Two major reasons may be cited:

1. There is no large, powerful professional organization dedicated to outdoor education; its practitioners hail from several disciplines, a minor function of each being method.
2. Even those practitioners who label themselves "outdoor educators" are usually action-oriented individuals with little inclination toward research.

Growth of the field of outdoor education may well attract more research-oriented individuals. But such growth is slow, and there are important things which need to be known. It is, therefore, important that plans be made for aggressive action not only to increase the amount of research but also to channel it into the areas of priority concern. The problem is mainly one of communication. The additional problem of disseminating research findings is likewise in the area of communication.

The following approaches may prove helpful:

1. An institution, preferably a university with adequate staff and research facilities, should be encouraged

to establish an entity, possibly called Institute for Outdoor Education Research. This entity would devote its attention to the matters of determining priorities, of communicating such to professionals in the field, of actually assisting in research design, and of disseminating and interpreting research findings.

2. The Council on Outdoor Education and Camping (of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation) should seek research alliances with other organizations having a common or similar interest in research. The Conservation Education Association, American Camping Association, Association of Interpretive Naturalists, American Nature Study Society, and the various state and regional outdoor education organizations should be asked to cooperate. Major functions of such an alliance should be determination of priorities and improved communication.

3. Broad publicity should be given to current research efforts and to statements of priorities through the regular publications of the cooperating organizations. The newsletter published by the AAHPER Outdoor Education Project, having the largest circulation, is a key publication in this regard. Consideration should be given to a series of special research bulletins or newsletters,

possibly edited by the proposed institute or the Research Committee of the Council on Outdoor Education and Camping.

4. The Council on Outdoor Education and Camping might well adopt "research" as a theme for its annual convention in the near future. Attempts to "get on the program" of other professional associations should be made.
5. Graduate professors in outdoor education and related fields, especially those directing graduate theses, should be kept informed of the current priorities statements.
6. Editors of the several newsletters published by public schools and colleges should be kept informed of research findings as well as needs.

Concluding Remarks

While past research efforts in outdoor education are subject to a number of valid criticisms, increased attention is being directed toward the problem. Renewed enthusiasm, new direction, and improved research techniques should combine to produce better research in the future.